



PO Box 4668 Postal Station E Ottawa ON K1S 5H8 CANADA
tél: +1.613.241.3777 fax: +1.613.244.3410 info@minesactioncanada.org www.minesactioncanada.org

1325 along the way to 2025: Mine Action and Women, Peace and Security

The past twenty years has shown that mainstreaming gender into mine action is necessary for effective and efficient implementation of the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Mainstreaming gender into mine action also helps states meet their obligations under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. States should capitalize on the links between these areas of work.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda is also approaching its 20th anniversary. Passed in 2000, Resolution 1325 and its follow-up resolutions (UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, and 2467) are based on evidence which shows women's active participation is critical to equitable and sustainable peace deals. These resolutions form the basis of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

The WPS agenda covers a wide variety of issues including work on disarmament. The WPS agenda in particular is closely linked to efforts to implement the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines and the Convention on Cluster Munitions which are commonly referred to as mine action.¹

Conventional weapons like landmines and cluster munitions have differing impacts on men, women, boys and girls. Those differing impacts are related to both biological sex and the socially-constructed gender roles that shape how we are supposed to act as men, women and non-binary identities. Remember that gender refers to those socially constructed roles and includes men, women, boys, girls and non-binary identities. Gender does not just mean talking about women; it means looking at how the gender roles of men and boys also affect society. Assuming that mine action is a gender neutral activity furthers the marginalization of women and girls by removing their experiences from consideration.

The need for effective and efficient mine action means that states, operators and national mine action authorities are already using gender analysis and integrating gender sensitive programming into their implementation of the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Work that is already being done in the mine action sector and in the WPS community is mutually beneficial, however, the two communities do not often overlap. Commonalities in work structure such as national action plans or strategies and dividing the sector into pillars of activities further highlight the links between these two fields. By strengthening the links between the WPS agenda and these two humanitarian disarmament treaties, the international community can ensure that mine action is both effective and inclusive.

¹ This paper uses a holistic understanding of mine action as the activities or pillars required to implement the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions: landmine clearance, victim assistance, research and advocacy, stockpile destruction, and risk education.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Resolution 1325 calls for: participation of women in peace processes; gender training in peacekeeping operations; protection of women and girls and respect for their rights; and gender mainstreaming in the reporting and implementation systems of the United Nations relating to conflict, peace and security. This groundbreaking resolution's preamble included a paragraph "Emphasizing the need for all parties to ensure that mine clearance and mine awareness programs take into account the special needs of women and girls."

Like mine action, the WPS agenda also has pillars. They are protection, participation, prevention and relief/recovery. All of these pillars have ties to the implementation of the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Mine clearance, risk education and victim assistance are related to protection and relief/recovery pillars but it seems the mine action community is most comfortable talking about the participation pillar.

To implement UNSC 1325 and the WPS agenda, states develop National Action Plans which are often referred to as the NAP. Most NAPs cover the four pillars (protection, participation, prevention and relief/recovery) with some additional issues covered. At least 70 states have existing or expired National Action Plans on WPS including 66 States Parties to the Ottawa Treaty.² Not all National Action Plans explicitly mention the Ottawa Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions or mine action but there links between this area of work and the WPS agenda are quite clear.

The links, however, are often overlooked due to silos in policy and practice. To meet the 2025 goal, we as a community need to break down the silos between the WPS agenda and mine action so that we can ensure that our work is inclusive and effective. A good place to start breaking down the silos is by simply identifying how mine action fits into the WPS pillars of protection, participation, prevention and relief and recovery.

Protection

In the WPS Agenda, protection involves ensuring that women and girls' rights are protected and promoted in conflict-affected situations or other humanitarian crisis. Particular attention is paid to protection from gender-based violence (GBV) in general and sexual violence more specifically. Research has shown that forced displacement is closely linked to higher levels of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls including domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, and forced or child marriage.

Landmines, cluster munitions and ERW prevent displaced women and girls from returning home leaving them at risk for sexual or gender-based violence over an extended period of time. For female landmine survivors, like all women and girls with disabilities, this risk is compounded.

Under Article 6 of the Ottawa Treaty, States Parties are obligated to provide assistance to states needing support to meet their obligations regarding clearing landmines and assisting victims. The Convention on Cluster Munition's expanded definition of victim further strengthens the link between victim assistance

² For the list of states with National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security, please see: <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>

and the WPS agenda by highlighting the impact of living in affected communities and the need for age and gender sensitive services. In addition, supporting clearance and victim assistance will also help states contribute to the protection pillar under the WPS agenda. Landmine clearance and victim assistance programs will indirectly reduce risk of sexual and gender-based violence by allowing women and girls to return to safety and by reducing the vulnerability of female landmine survivors. To achieve this will require funding mine action consistently, sustainably and strategically; multi-year funding is ideal.

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The mine action sector, like all sectors, has seen its share of issues with sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse. These issues are being actively addressed by a number of actors; however, there is much work to be done to end these

crimes and ensure justice for those harmed. Additional attention should be paid to safeguarding processes and in this case, mine action will benefit from increased interaction with the WPS sector. Mines Action Canada welcomes the focus on ending impunity for exploitation and abuse and will work with all those committed to these ends.

Participation

Research shows that women still make up less than a quarter of delegates to disarmament forums at the international level.³ A recent UNIDIR report shows that the Mine Ban Treaty meetings have had a lower level of women's participation than a number of other large disarmament forums. In 2018, women made up approximately 33 per cent of the attendees at the meetings of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions while the proportion of female participants at the Mine Ban Treaty meeting in December 2017 was only 25.4 per cent. Despite the perception that as successful humanitarian disarmament treaties, the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions must be leaders in women's participation, the numbers tell a different story.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions sees average women's participation but the same cannot be said for the Ottawa Treaty. The UNIDIR report reviewed eight Mine Ban Treaty meetings (2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2015, and 2016) and found an average proportion of 20.08 per cent women while their analysis of eight NPT meetings (1999, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2014, and 2015) showed that the average proportion of women's participation is 20.95 per cent. The difference between those two numbers is not large but it is significant when you take into consideration the different time periods covered. The NPT meetings surveyed dated earlier with two meetings occurring before UN Security Council Resolution 1325.⁴ Similar research by the Gender and Mine Action Program of the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining notes that while there has been slight improvement in women's

³ Article 36, "Women and multilateral disarmament forums: Patterns of underrepresentation"

<http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Underrepresentation-women-FINAL1.pdf>

⁴ UNIDIR, Still Behind the Curve, 2019, <http://unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/still-behind-the-curve-en-770.pdf>

participation in Ottawa Treaty meetings recently, the number of women in the 2017 meeting remained low.⁵

Civil society tends to have more diverse representation at disarmament forums. Civil society organizations also have the capacity to ensure that newcomers to disarmament forums have mentorship and assistance in navigating the archaic and patriarchal structures that dominate international discussions on peace and security. One way to support meaningful participation of women, women's organizations and networks in peace and security is to support the international campaigns and networks who have a proven track record in bringing diverse voices to the table.

The 1997 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a driving force behind the negotiation and the ongoing implementation of the Ottawa Treaty, has always been a women-led movement. Up until 2018, all the directors of the ICBL were women and women continue to lead at the national and international levels.

Organizations involved in implementing the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions have long had a focus on gender equality. Hiring of women is a key priority for a number of organizations as a path towards gender equality and empowerment. Mine action operators have noted that employment of women in mine action can change attitudes towards women. In post-conflict contexts employing female deminers brings women into the peacebuilding process and helps them contribute to the reconstruction of their communities.

Women deminers are not only employed but they are seen as powerful agents of change in their communities.

The voices of female survivors and of young women living in contaminated areas are fundamental to ensuring that the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions are implemented in an inclusive manner.

There is considerable scope in this pillar for concrete actions to increase meaningful participation of female landmine survivors in the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions as well as young women from landmine affected communities. The voices of female survivors and of young women living in contaminated areas are fundamental to ensuring that the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions are implemented in an inclusive manner.

Prevention

The Prevention pillar refers to 'prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations'. Within the WPS Agenda, it is often the most overlooked pillar and many may think that the links to mine action are not as clear as it with participation or relief and recovery. This oversight leads to states missing out on opportunities to promote peace and a landmine free world.

⁵ Gender and Mine Action Project, Factsheet, 2018, <http://www.gmap.ch/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/IGC-DIG-Factsheet.pdf>

The Swedish International Development Agency notes that prevention includes “involving women and their specific needs in conflict prevention and disarmament activities.”⁶ Under the pillar of Participation, this paper discussed the need to involve women in disarmament activities at the international level. At the program level, the inclusion of women and girls with their specific needs and knowledge is crucially important to successful implementation of victim assistance or survey and clearance obligations under the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Women and girls go different places in communities than boys and men; each demographic group has different relations to the land and locations around the community, therefore, survey and clearance cannot be done effectively without hearing from the full community. Other factors such as age, ability and socio-economic status also need to be taken into consideration to ensure that survey and clearance are done as effectively as possible. It is well known that effective victim assistance is age and gender sensitive. There is no way to know if victim assistance is truly age and gender sensitive without asking women and girls.

Mine action has played an important role in peace processes often providing a common endeavor to bring together conflicting parties thus reducing the risk of a return to hostilities. In landmine affected communities, the conflict does not end until the land is cleared and victims can fully participate in society. Within five years of the entry into force of the Ottawa Treaty, research was showing that mine action contributed to peacebuilding. In countries like Afghanistan, Colombia, and Sri Lanka, former combatants are hired into mine action programs as part of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) activities. In these programs, the social trust necessary for conflict prevention is built by ex-combatants working with former adversaries on a joint project and by strengthening the links between ex-combatants and their communities. At the same time, employment in mine action reduced the financial and social pull factors towards armed groups. For women leaving armed groups, especially women who joined the armed groups for political reasons, employment with mine action programs

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provides opportunities for leadership that are missing when DDR programs offer heavily gendered training options such as tailoring, hairdressing and cake decorating.

The WPS pillar of prevention and mine action are mutually reinforcing. Preventing conflict limits the risk of mine and explosive remnants of war contamination while mine action promotes peace and conflict prevention. Considering mine action through the lens of prevention and remembering that prevention can include mine action will result in more effective implementation of the WPS agenda, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Ottawa Treaty.

Relief and Recovery

Under the WPS Agenda, relief and recovery focuses on responding to international crises through a gendered lens. Frequently this pillar of the WPS Agenda is linked to addressing women and girls’ unique experiences in displacement situations and in refugee or internally displaced persons camps and settlements.

⁶ Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), ‘Gender Tool Box – Women, Peace and Security,’ March 2015, <https://www.sida.se/contentassets/3a820dbd152f4fca98bacde8a8101e15/women-peace-and-security.pdf>

When it comes to the implementation of the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions there are significant overlaps between the pillars of mine action and the WPS pillar of relief and recovery. The provision of risk education in situations of displacement and in post-emergency situations is an important step towards ensuring the safety of civilian populations. This risk education needs to be gender and age sensitive to ensure that the whole community is reached.

Clearance of landmines and cluster munition contamination including survey and land release are necessary to allow displaced communities to return home. Survey and clearance are essential relief and recovery tasks in post-conflict situations.

Advocacy and victim assistance under the two disarmament treaties often promotes the rights of landmine victims. Female landmine survivors face intersecting barriers to full realization of their human rights due to their gender, and their status as persons with acquired disabilities. Promotion of the rights of landmine victims often results in additional attention to the rights of persons with disabilities and the rights of women. Furthermore, the rights-based implementation of the Ottawa Treaty and Convention on Cluster Munitions' provisions on victim assistance draw on international human rights documents including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Victim assistance under the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions requires age and gender sensitive services be provided to meet the needs of landmine victims and others with similar needs due to the principle of non-discrimination. Support to victim assistance programs in complex emergencies can help ensure that the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities are met. Women and girls with disabilities, including landmine survivors, are often overlooked in humanitarian settings despite being among the most vulnerable. Age- and gender-sensitive data from the Landmine Monitor can assist in ensuring that women and girls with disabilities are taken into account when services are planned.

Landmine clearance keeps peace operations safe and often the United Nations Mine Action Service is closely linked to peace operations. When peace operations work with landmine clearance or explosive ordnance disposal teams, women and diverse voices will need to be consulted to prioritize tasks and develop work plans.

In short, the obligations under the Ottawa Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the relief and recovery pillar of the WPS Agenda are mutually reinforcing. States have treaty obligations to implement mine action and the obligation under 1325 to ensure that mine action activities are inclusive of women and girls.

Conclusion

The Women, Peace and Security agenda is crucially important to meeting the objectives of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. States have obligations under the WPS Security Council resolutions to ensure that women and girls are able to participate in peace and security just like they have obligations to complete the implementation of the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions in accordance with existing deadlines and action plans. States can promote both areas of

work by including mine action in their National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security and including Women, Peace and Security considerations in their national mine action strategies.

In many cases, highlighting the links between mine action and the WPS agenda is a matter of demonstrating the intersections between existing work rather than adding new tasks. In both sectors, legal obligations and political goals will be met more efficiently when implementation is done across silos.

Highlighting the links between mine action and the WPS agenda is a matter of demonstrating the intersections between existing work rather than adding new tasks.

The more people participating in the efforts towards the implementation of the Ottawa Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and UN Security Council Resolution the better. To quote a joint statement on Gender and Disarmament Machinery at the 2017 First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly “the way disarmament issues are treated and discussed is affected by who participates in the discussion.”⁷ The wider the participation the more effective the decisions made will be whether they are at the international, national or local level.

⁷ Canada on behalf of a group of states, “Statement on Gender and the Disarmament Machinery,” 26 October 2017, http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com17/statements/26Oct_Canada_joint.pdf